

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Goldenrod Showboat

Other Name/Site Number: Goldenrod Showboat

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Showboat Landing, 400 N. Wharf Street

Not for publication:\_\_\_

City/Town: St. Louis

Vicinity:\_\_\_

State: Missouri County: St. Louis Code: 510

Zip Code:\_\_\_

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X
Public-Local: \_\_\_
Public-State: \_\_\_
Public-Federal:\_\_\_

Category of Property

Building(s): \_\_\_
District: \_\_\_
Site: \_\_\_
Structure: X
Object:\_\_\_

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

\_\_\_
\_\_\_
1
\_\_\_
\_\_\_

Noncontributing

\_\_\_ buildings
\_\_\_ sites
\_\_\_ structures
\_\_\_ objects
\_\_\_ Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register:\_\_\_

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

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**4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Certifying Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Commenting or Other Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

**5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- \_\_\_ Entered in the National Register
- \_\_\_ Determined eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ Determined not eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ Removed from the National Register
- \_\_\_ Other (explain):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

Historic: Recreation and Culture

Sub: Theater  
Music Facility

Current: Recreation and Culture

Sub: Theater  
Music Facility



**7. DESCRIPTION**

Architectural Classification: N/A

Materials:

Foundation: N/A

Walls: N/A

Roof: N/A

Other: N/A

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**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

The Goldenrod Showboat was built in 1909 for W.R. Markle, the most successful showboat owner of the era. It was the largest showboat ever constructed, measuring 200 x 45 feet. The exterior was plain by contemporary standards, but its interior was lavishly decorated. The stage, 40 x 25 feet, faced an auditorium 162 x 40 feet seating 1400 people. Five thousand lights illuminated the theater, and full length mirrors exaggerated the size of the room. Gilt, friezes, red valour draperies and bright carpets helped reinforce the illusion of opulence.

In recent years the Goldenrod has been altered to accommodate smaller dinner theater audiences. About one-third of the original auditorium has been partitioned off to serve as buffet and bar. Seats have been removed from the forward half of the truncated auditorium and replaced with small tables and chairs. Air conditioning and heating ducts have been installed in recent years.

The exterior is less altered. The open porch at the bow has been enclosed to serve as a ticket office. Several years ago it became necessary to place the boat inside a steel barge in order to keep her afloat. The old hull, however, is still intact.

The most serious problem is the constant peeling of the exterior paint, caused by heavy pollution. This is one factor in the present management's decision to consider moving the Goldenrod to another berth below the city in the near future.

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: \_\_ Statewide: \_\_ Locally: \_\_

Applicable National

Register Criteria: A \_ B \_ C \_ D \_

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions): A \_ B \_ C \_ D \_ E \_ F \_ G \_

NHL Criteria: 1

NHL Theme(s): III. Expressing Cultural Values  
2. Visual and Performing Arts

Areas of Significance: Theater

Period(s) of Significance: 1900's

Significant Dates: 1909-1937

Significant Person(s):

Cultural Affiliation:

Architect/Builder: Pope Dock Co., West Virginia

Historic Contexts: 8a2B Drama: Theaters

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**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**

The Goldenrod Showboat was built in 1909 and was the largest, most elaborately decorated showboat ever constructed. The Goldenrod was docked at St. Louis in 1937 and continues to operate as a theater specializing in the traditional melodrama of the late show-boating period.

Showboating was a means of bringing dramatic and musical entertainment to frontier families who lived along the great rivers of Middle America. The institution of showboating flourished during two great eras. The first began in the 1830s and ended with the outbreak of the Civil War. The second era began in the 1870s and continued into the 1920s.

It was during the second great period of showboating that the Goldenrod was built, in 1909. It was the largest showboat ever constructed, and drew large crowds across some fifteen Midwestern States each season.

Showboating reached its peak around 1910, when 21 boats plied the waters of the Mississippi basin. In 1928 there were 14, and 5 in 1938. Motion pictures, increased mobility, and the Great Depression contributed to the decline.

In September 1937, the Goldenrod docked at Locust Street landing in St. Louis. Rapidly diminishing support from smaller towns prompted the owners to remain permanently in the city. Today the Goldenrod continues to specialize in old-time melodrama, entertaining thousands each year.

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**Donovan, Frank Robert, River Boats of America, 1966Graham, Philip, Showboats: The History of an American Institution, 1951

McDermott, John D., "The Goldenrod, Missouri," special report, Historic Sites Survey, 1967.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

 Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. Previously Listed in the National Register. Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register. Designated a National Historic Landmark. Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

 State Historic Preservation Office Other State Agency Federal Agency Local Government University Other (Specify Repository):**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreage of Property:

UTM References:      **Zone   Easting   Northing**

15   745350   4278970

Verbal Boundary Description:

The Goldenrod Showboat is not permanently moored. It may in fact be moved from its present site in the near future. The boundaries, therefore are defined by the dimensions of the showboat. For the past 38 years the boat has been moored approximately 800 feet south of Eads Bridge, St. Louis, on the west bank of the Mississippi (see map B) labeled "Hydrographic Survey, Mississippi River," and dated Sept. 8 & 9, 1966.)

Boundary Justification:

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**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

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Date:

Edited by:

Telephone:

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY  
Designated December 24, 1967

The format of this nomination has been updated to reflect the current standard for National Historic Landmark nominations. Within Section 8, NHL criteria and theme(s) have been applied. For some nominations (prior to the adoption of a separate NHL form), information on function or use – Section 6 – was added. Otherwise no information in the nomination was altered, added or deleted.